

LOI-CAMP(Y-PRO)-1

LES VOYAGEURS DE LA VERENDRYE

DIRECTOR'S REPORT 1970

STAFF & TRIPS:

Another good Summer for Les Voyageurs. Paul Mongraw, Paul Heyer, Walter Gordon, Pip MacKenzie and Gary Maavara all are recommended for rehire if they should want to work for us again.

In spite of an extremely wet first term all trips were successful in the end. Paul Heyer and his crew went down the Capitachouan to Le Domaine and were trucked back to camp. Paul Mongraw and Walter Gordon both took their crews Northwest into the Grand Lake Victoria area.

Second term Mongraw went to Ottawa Lake, an area the camp hadn't used for several years. The entire crew was extremely pleased with the trip. The area is recommended. Heyer had a fishing crew and he brought them up the Camachigama to Indian Lake. Gordon and his crew went up the Capitachouan to Lake Moore. Heyer attempted to reach the Chochocouane River but the creek access was too dry. This is probably the most beautiful river in the area and a new and more reliable access to it must be found.

TWO WEEK CAMPER:

First period we had a two-week camper. He joined Paul Heyer's crew at mid trip re-supply. The camper was particularly difficult and this crew was particularly close knit so the experience was fairly unfortunate. However, even under the best of circumstances, I believe it is silly to add a member to a crew in the middle of a trip. I opposed the idea of two-week campers from the time it was first suggested. The two-week camper was our only "escapee". I am still opposed to the idea!

FOOD:

The food list was pretty well based on the previous year and it was good with the following exceptions:

We tend to overbuy in the bulk items i.e. rolled oats, spaghetti, sugar and flour - leading to considerable waste.

We still need a palatable dessert pudding.

MAINTENANCE & REPAIR:

The cabin re-assembled by Blake and the base attendants last year was roofed and a door installed. (A rather large tree had fallen on it over the winter) Normal repairs to benches, etc., were made.

A new garbage pit will have to be dug next year.

The dock is still sound and with a few repairs, e.g. boards changed, will probably last several more years.

Several dead trees were cleared from base camp but many more remain that present a menace. A chain saw borrowed from Kamp Kanawana for a few days (at change-over, perhaps) would aid immensely in this task.

The campsites used underwent normal improvements and are in good condition. However, more permanent toilet and garbage pits should be dug on these sites.

The base camp stove is on its last legs and during the course of next Summer a replacement should be found if possible.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Over the Summer the staff have found the necessity of the following:

- On re-supply the director should bring, besides the base camp first aid kit, spare paddles, packs, complete canoe repair kit, ax handle.
- Trippers should be equipped with C.I.P. road maps.
- We need a new supplier of paddles - the toys bought by campers from Kamp Kanawana were entirely inadequate.
- We need new maps of all sectors.
- The list of things to bring needs to be trimmed down to reflect the campers real needs rather than to comfort mother.

It has been suggested that Les Voyageurs de la Verendrye as we know it be discontinued; that the operation be moved to Kamp Kanawana, and that the trips be reduced to two weeks. I am personally violently opposed to any change of this nature.

Les Voyageurs, running at capacity, shows profit. (Even this year, with attendance down and extraordinary truck expenses, we broke even or slightly better) It seems to me that we should be striving to bring up attendance rather than thinking of abandoning this type of camping.

Twelve years ago the Montreal YMCA decided to get into the area of canoe and canvas camping offering trips of one month and three weeks in Quebec's wilderness. Since that time over 500 teenage boys have enjoyed all the pleasure and the character building benefits such trips offer. Most have rounded off their skills to the point where they could take extended canoe trips on their own. Most have gained a deeper and more understanding love of the wilderness.

Is this no longer important?

The thousands of man hours that went into making each camper's stay at Les Voyageurs as happy and successful as possible, are these no longer important.

The suggestion has been made that this type of camping no longer responds to a need among our teenaged community. No one who saw the lads up there this Summer could believe that. No one who has left our city and lived under canvas in our beautiful wilderness for a month and felt all the muck and grime and tensions of the city slip away from him could entertain such a thought.

A camp like Les Voyageurs is needed and desired today more than ever. In fact, there is not a damn thing wrong with the camp except that not enough money is spent on it. With proper promotion the camp would have a waiting list.

Les Voyageurs should have its own promotion brochure - not be a back page item on Kamp Kanawana's. This should be sent to, among others, all ex seniors at Kamp Kanawana of the last two years. We have had campers from New York, Boston, Chicago and other U.S. cities. A five line advertisement in the major paper of even these three cities would reach millions of potential campers.

I'm not a promotion expert but there are some around. Surely our Board members can come up with someone to give us guidance in this field.

Once we've attracted capacity attendance we must keep it. To do that we must offer the most excellent canoe and canvas camp available anywhere!

- Our fleet must be renewed at the rate of two canoes per year.
- Our truck changed every two years.
- Tents must be checked, repaired and/or replaced every spring.
- All cook kits should be complete and in good repair.
- Our staff must be the best picked and best trained anywhere.
- The location of the camp must, in the near future, be changed.

In conclusion, we must be prepared, over the next two years, to spend; to spend time and energy in revamping Les Voyageurs into what it potentially is, the best camp of its nature; to spend the necessary money to bring it up to par and to tell the world about it. This undoubtedly means the operation is going into the red for the first two years of its renewed existence, but from then on we will have a profitable camp, running at capacity - the best tripping camp anywhere.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Board or with any Board member to discuss the contents of this report. I am prepared, at the request of, and in cooperation with the Board, to prepare a comprehensive design for a renewed Les Voyageurs de la Verendrye.

Respectfully submitted,

Yves St. Pierre,
Director '70.